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ABSTRACT

This report summarizes results of two 1996 surveys of campus safety at public four-year institutions of higher education. Major findings included: (1) liquor law violations and burglary were the most common crimes, averaging 2.5 to 2.8 per 1,000 enrolled students; the incidence of violent crimes was much lower (.1 to .4 per 1,000 students); (2) 58 percent of respondents expressed greater concern with security issues now than five years ago; (3) alcohol use/abuse was listed as a contributing factors in 43 percent of problems cited; 29 percent of crimes were attributable to the influence of nonstudents; (4) housing patterns of students affected the type of offenses reported, with fewer date rapes (but more theft and alcohol abuse problems) at institutions with higher percentages of residential students and fewer commuter students; (5) crime prevention efforts included student educational programs, increased visibility of security officers, limited access during nights and weekends, more escort and shuttle bus services, and improved outdoor lighting; and (6) 98 percent of the institutions compiled an annual security report. An appendix lists survey respondents to one of the surveys. (DB)

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safety on campus

AT PUBLIC, FOUR-YEAR COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

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Safety on Campus
at Public Four-Year Colleges and Universities

Council on Student Affairs
National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges
One Dupont Circle, N.W., Suite 710, Washington, D.C. 20036

SEPTEMBER 1997

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Dear Colleague:

In November of 1995, Dr. Carol Wiggins, Chair of the NASULGC Council on Student Affairs and Vice President for Student Affairs at the University of Connecticut, appointed a Council discussion group for campus safety issues. In the very early discussion stages it became clear the group needed current information from member institutions. Our primary questions were about the area and level of concerns about safety issues, how these concerns may have changed over time, and what specific programs had developed to address these concerns. A survey was written and mailed to Senior Student Affairs Officers during the Summer of 1996. The response was excellent in total numbers and in the completeness of the answers to our questions. In addition to the survey we are fortunate to have access to the most current National Center for Education Statistics publication titled *Campus Crime and Security at Postsecondary Education Institutions*. When viewed together, the two sets of data provide a more complete picture of opinions about campus safety, and an update of recent institutional safety related activities.

A special note of thanks should go to the discussion group whose names are listed elsewhere, to Dr. Carl Burns and the UMR Office of Academic Assessment and Student Research staff, to the Council on Student Affairs Executive Committee and to the NASULGC staff. We all hope this document helps answer some of your questions about campus safety. It has been our pleasure to serve you in this way.

Sincerely,

Wendell R. Ogrosky

Wendell R. Ogrosky
Vice Chancellor for Student and
International Affairs
University of Missouri-Rolla

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Executive Summary

- Liquor law violations and burglary were the most common crimes reported at public, four-year institutions in 1994, averaging 2.5 to 2.8 per 1,000 enrolled students. The probability of more violent crimes such as sex offenses or aggravated assault occurring was much lower (.1 to .4 per 1,000 students).
- Most NASULGC respondents to the 1996 safety survey (58 percent) expressed greater concern with security issues now than five years ago.
- Alcohol use/abuse was listed as a contributing factor in 43 percent of the problems cited by NASULGC administrators. Likewise, 29 percent of the crimes reported on NASULGC campuses were attributable to the influence of individuals who were not associated with the institution (non-students).
- The housing patterns of students affected the types of offenses reported. For example, there were fewer problems with date rape at those NASULGC institutions with higher percentages of residential students than at campuses with a larger share of commuters. However, theft and alcohol abuse were listed more frequently as problems at residential NASULGC campuses.
- Both the NASULGC and NCES survey respondents reported a variety of measures in place by 1996 to combat crime. Common procedures included educational programs for students, increased visibility of security officers on campus, limited access during nights and weekends to academic buildings, more escort and shuttle bus services, and improved lighting of parking lots and walkways.
- Almost all public, four-year institutions (98 percent) in 1996 compiled an annual security report. Information from these reports were distributed to current students and employees and usually posted in residence halls and academic offices.

Safety on Campus
at Public Four-Year Colleges and Universities

Administrators at public, four-year colleges and universities hope that the students, faculty, and staff studying and working on campus develop a sense of community. These communities may vary dramatically. Some campuses are located in rural areas and have a majority of residential students while other institutions serve more urban or suburban commuting populations.

A common interest at all these campus communities is a concern for safety and crime prevention. Courses are offered on campus from early morning until late in the evening, and students, faculty, and staff often move from one building to another several times each day in their academic endeavors.

How safe are these campuses? What efforts have been undertaken to improve security measures? How are current and prospective students and employees being informed about safety concerns? This report will address these issues and review the findings from two recent national surveys on campus safety.

Sources of Information

In the fall of 1996 the NASULGC Council on Student Affairs distributed a campus safety questionnaire to all member institutions and received useable responses from 62 percent of those surveyed. The purpose of this questionnaire was to determine what were the major concerns of administrators who were responsible for campus security issues.[1]

Another national safety survey was being conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) in the spring of 1996. The Crime Awareness and Campus Security Act of 1990 requires all postsecondary institutions participating in federally financed Title IV student aid programs to disclose information about campus safety policies and procedures. In addition, campus personnel must provide annual statistics on specific crimes reported on campus. The overall response rate of all postsecondary education institutions to the 1996 NCES survey was 94 percent. Highlights focusing on the data relating to public, four-year institutions from this NCES report will be included in this analysis.[2]

How Safe Are Our Public, Four-Year Campuses?

The NCES survey reveals that the top five crimes reported by the largest percentage of public, four-year institutions in 1994 were:

- burglary (82 percent),
- drug abuse violation (66 percent),
- liquor law violation (63 percent),
- aggravated assault (63 percent), and
- motor vehicle theft (61 percent) (see Figure 1).

However, the likelihood of having certain crimes committed varied by the type of offense. For example, Figure 1 also illustrates that in the NCES survey there was a much higher probability of liquor law violations or burglary (2.5 to 2.8 per 1,000 students) than more violent crimes such as sex offenses (.1 per 1,000 students).

Although NASULGC administrators were not asked to quantify the number of crimes reported on their campuses, they were encouraged to identify which types of crimes concerned them the most. Figure 2 illustrates those crimes that ranked the highest level of concern. The four crimes reported by at least one-third of the NASULGC respondents were:

- theft (50 percent),
- acquaintance/date rape (40 percent),
- violence (38 percent), and
- rape (36 percent).

Most NASULGC respondents expressed greater concern with safety issues now than five years ago. Almost three in five (58 percent) expressed "more or much more concern" while only 8 percent reported "less or much less concern" (see Figure 3).

NASULGC administrators were asked to consider the role that alcohol and non-students played with regard to safety issues. Alcohol use/abuse was listed a contributing factor in 43 percent of the problems cited by NASULGC respondents. Non-students also affected crime statistics at NASULGC institutions. Slightly more than one in four crimes reported on campus (29 percent) were attributable to the influence of individuals who were not associated with the institution.

Some interesting differences relate to institutional characteristics and safety issues. For example, NASULGC administrators at rural campuses indicated a greater concern with theft and alcohol abuse than did their colleagues at urban

institutions. By contrast, respondents at urban settings were more likely to cite problems with non-students than were personnel at rural or suburban institutions.

The level of concern about certain safety issues also was related to the housing patterns of students. For example, there were fewer problems with date rape at those NASULGC institutions with higher percentages of residential students than at campuses with a larger share of commuters. However, theft and alcohol abuse were listed more frequently as problems at residential NASULGC campuses.

What Efforts Have Been Implemented to Improve Safety Issues and Prevent Crimes?

Both the NASULGC and NCES surveys reported a variety of measures in place by 1996 to combat crime. The most common procedures listed by at least two-thirds of the NASULGC respondents included:

- education programs for students (93 percent);
- increased visibility of safety/police officers on campus (83 percent);
- educational programs targeted to specific groups (fraternities/athletes) (81 percent);
- safety training for RAs (76 percent);
- changes in building security (71 percent);
- escorts for all students (71 percent);
- greater enforcement of regulations (71 percent); and
- cutting of landscaping to reduce hiding places (67 percent) (see Figure 4).

Similar efforts underway in 1996 in at least two-thirds of all public, four-year institutions surveyed by NCES included:

- limited access to residence halls (95 percent);
- limited access during nights and weekends to academic buildings (94 percent);
- safety/crime prevention presentations to campus groups (94 percent);
- foot or bicycle patrols by security personnel (93 percent);
- program of publishing or posting safety reminders (88 percent);
- night-time escort services (83 percent);
- emergency phone systems (79 percent); and
- victim's assistance programs (70 percent) (see Figure 5).

Of particular concern to administrators were the procedures involved in handling the victims of violent crimes, such as sex offenses. Typically, such crimes require more counseling services than property crimes involving, for example, the theft of a stereo from a dormitory room. The NCES survey reported that public, four-year institutions primarily used the following types of counseling facilities for victims of sex offenses:

- rape crisis center or hotline run by the community (90 percent);
- campus health center (84 percent); and
- campus mental health or counseling center (84 percent) (see Figure 6).

One strategy that is widely used by public, four-year institutions to improve security and prevent crimes has been to increase the lighting levels around campus. A majority of the NCES respondents cited three areas that had received improved lighting during the years 1991–96. They were:

- campus grounds and walkways (96 percent);
- parking lots and structures (91 percent); and
- the interiors of campus buildings (68 percent).

The location of the campus also influenced the type of safety programs offered. For example, urban NASULGC institutions were more likely to have the following programs in place:

- appointing an office/person to deal with safety issues;
- hiring more safety/police officers;
- having a campus crime task force;
- providing escorts for all students; and
- holding forums to deal with safety related topics.

The most frequently listed programs at rural NASULGC institutions were:

- greater enforcement of regulations;
- programs for offenders;
- educational programs targeted to specific groups (fraternities/athletes); and
- safety training for RAs.

The large majority of administrators in charge of campus security at public, four-year institutions (80 percent) use sworn officers employed by the institution as their primary type of safety employee. Slightly more than one half (55 percent)

use security officers/guards and less than one in four (23 percent) use contract security personnel.

How are Current and Prospective Students and Employees being Informed about Campus Safety Concerns?

Some strategies to improve safety involve educational presentations to students and employees while other measures pertain to changes in campus security procedures. In both instances, it is important to keep each academic community informed of current measures to reduce the number of crimes. According to the NCES survey, almost all public, four-year institutions (98 percent) compiled annual security reports in 1996. The most typical formats for these statistics were:

- separate publications (91 percent);
- text in another student or employee publication (46 percent);
- articles in the campus newspaper (42 percent); and
- use of electronic communication (22 percent).

Figure 7 describes the most common ways these annual security reports were disseminated. The techniques used in 1996 by the large majority of public, four-year institutions included:

- mailing upon request to prospective students and/or employees (93 percent);
- distribution at student orientation, registration, and/or other student activities (93 percent);
- placement in various campus offices and/or building lobbies (90 percent);
- mailing upon request to current students and/or employees (87 percent); and
- distribution in student residence halls (63 percent).

Summary

Recent federal legislation has mandated that annual crime statistics be collected at colleges and universities. Because no academic community is immune to societal behaviors, a variety of offenses have occurred at public, four-year institutions. Administrators have responded to these reported offenses with a wide variety of responses including discussion groups to inform and educate students and employees on safety issues, increased visibility of security officials on campus, changes to improve building security, increased lighting levels in parking lots and along walkways, and additional escort and shuttle bus services. Annual security reports have been made available as separate publications, as articles in the campus newspaper, and through electronic means to keep students and employees informed. Administrators must be committed to a combination of (1) strategies designed to minimize the number of crimes, and (2) efforts to keep members of the academic community informed on ways to improve their safety on campus in order to maintain the most possible supportive and productive environment.

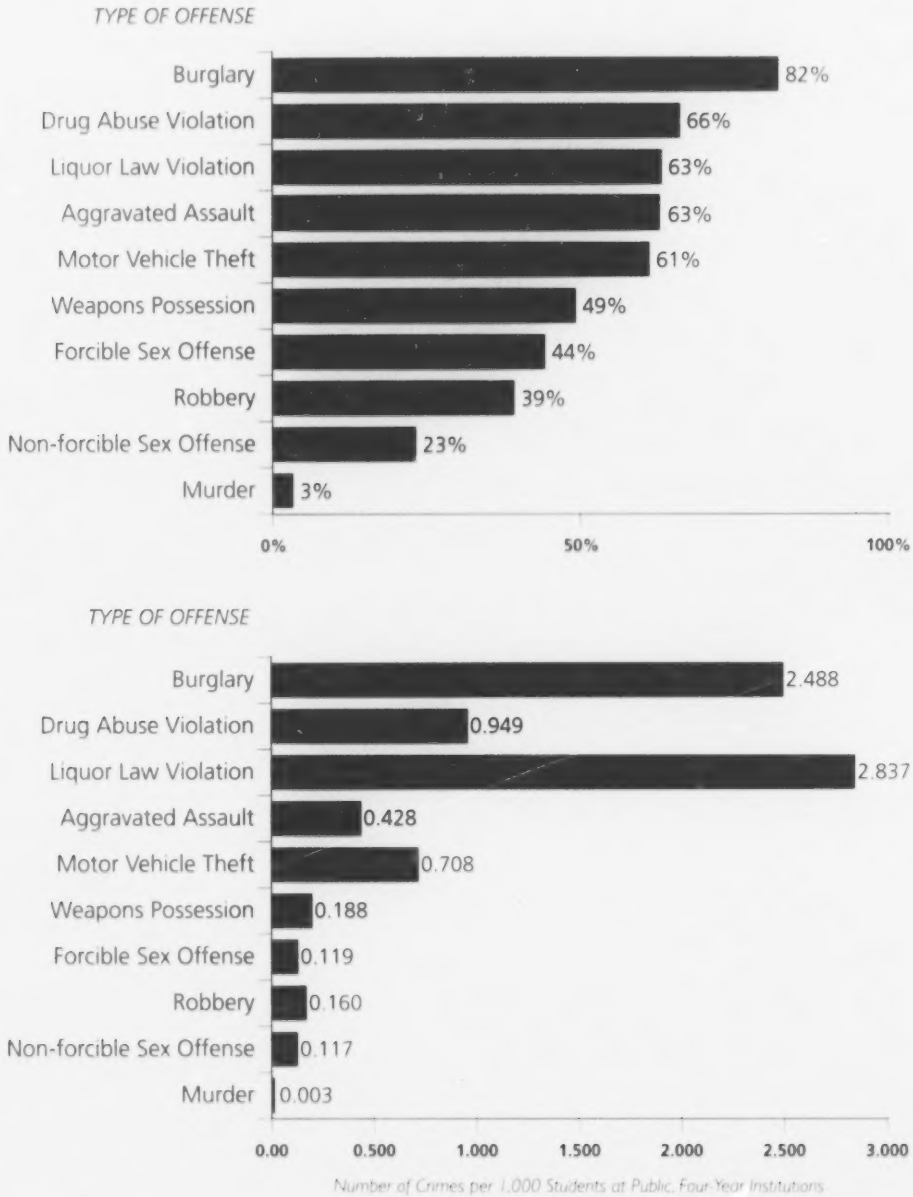
NOTES

[1] The average size of the institutions participating in the NASULGC survey was about 19,000 students, and the large majority of students commuted to classes (78 percent). Just over half of the campuses were located in urban areas (56 percent). Slightly more than one in four (28 percent) were situated in rural locations, and 16 percent were classified as suburban settings. Almost all of the institutions had a Police Department (94 percent), and usually these were staffed with non-commissioned personnel (65 percent).

[2] Some crime statistics were collected for 1992, 1994 and 1996. For further detailed information on safety statistics by type and control of postsecondary institution, see U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. *Campus Crime and Security at Postsecondary Education Institutions.* Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1997.

FIGURE 1

Percentage of Public, Four-Year Institutions Reporting Specific Crimes and the Number of These Crimes per 1,000 Students: 1994

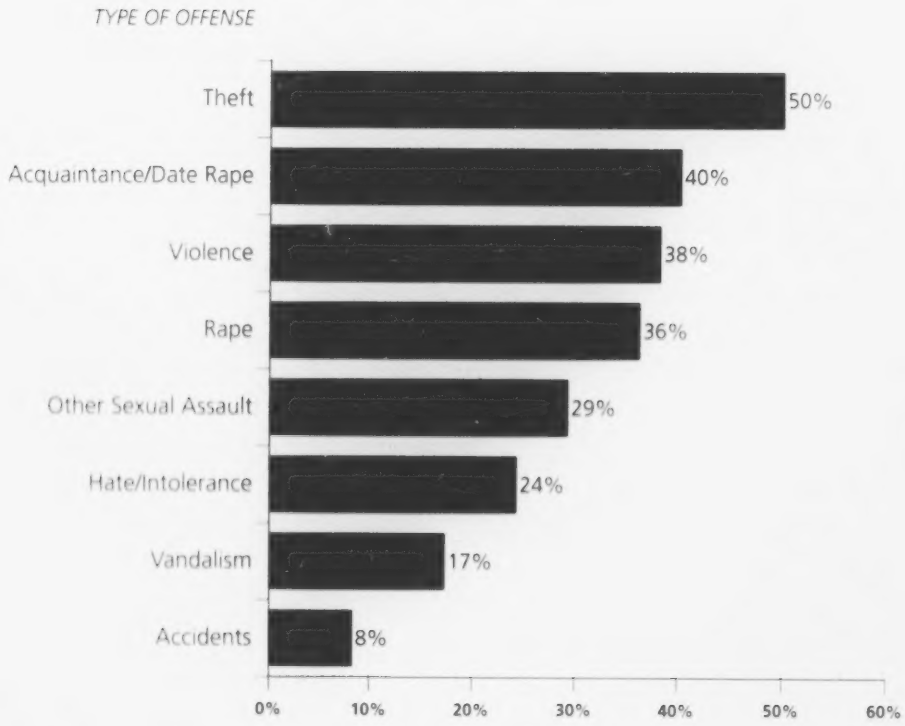


NOTE: These categories follow the definitions used by the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *Campus Crime and Security at Postsecondary Education Institutions*, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1997, pp. 11, 15–16, and 21.

FIGURE 2

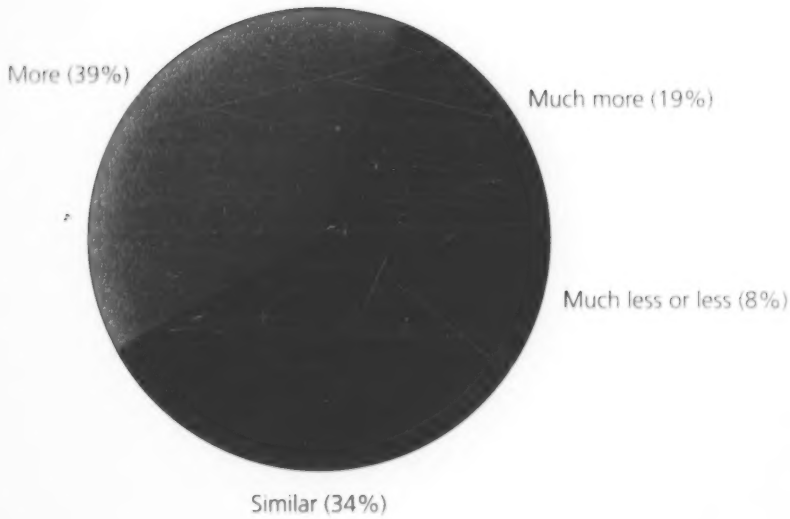
Percentage of NASULGC Institutions with a High Level of Concern for Specific Types of Crimes: 1996



NOTE: No specific definitions of these crimes were prescribed in the 1996 NASULGC survey.
SOURCE: NASULGC Council on Student Affairs Campus Safety Survey, working papers, 1997.

FIGURE 3

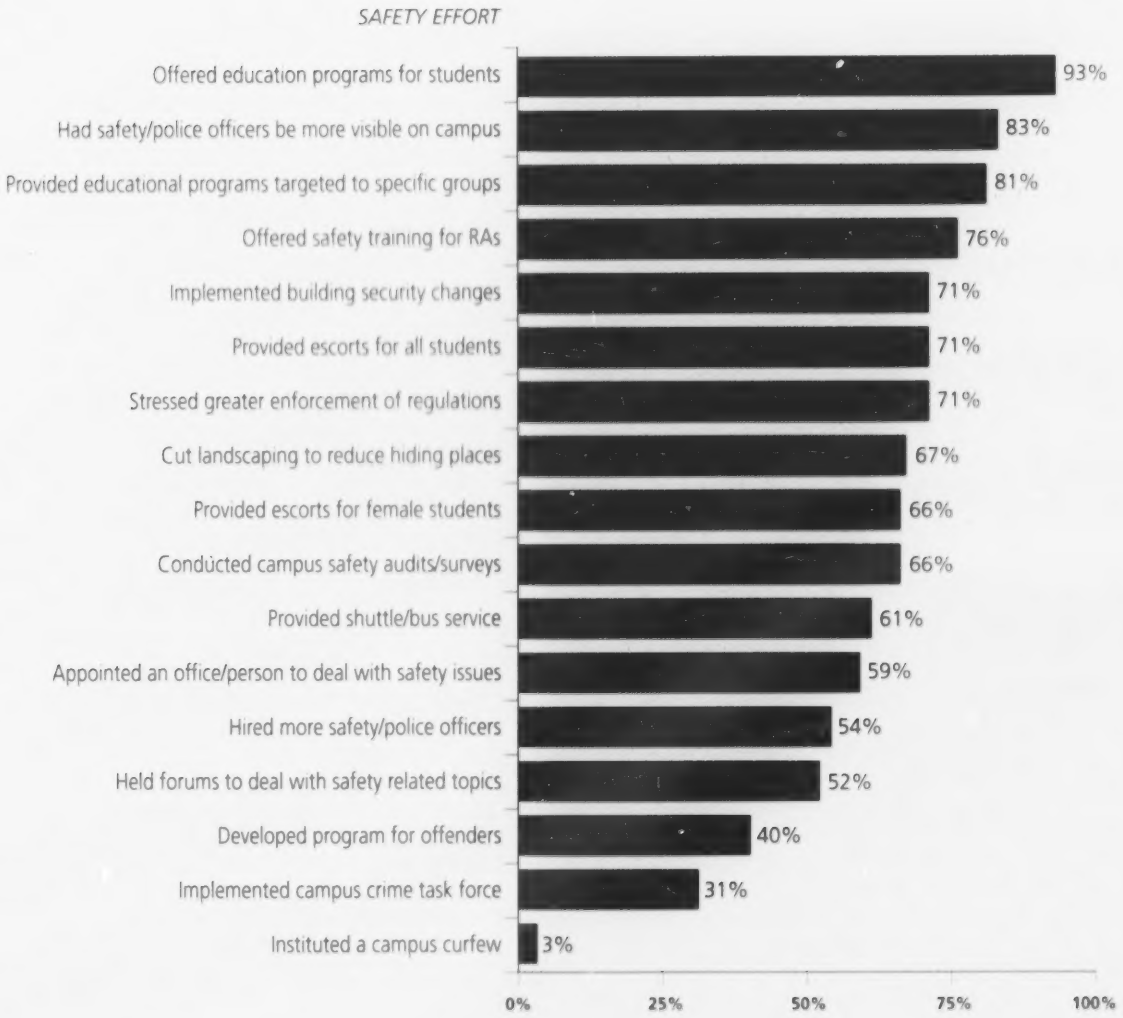
Current Level of Concern with Safety Issues at NASULGC Institutions Compared to Five Years Ago



SOURCE: NASULGC Council on Student Affairs Campus Safety Survey, working papers, 1997.

FIGURE 4

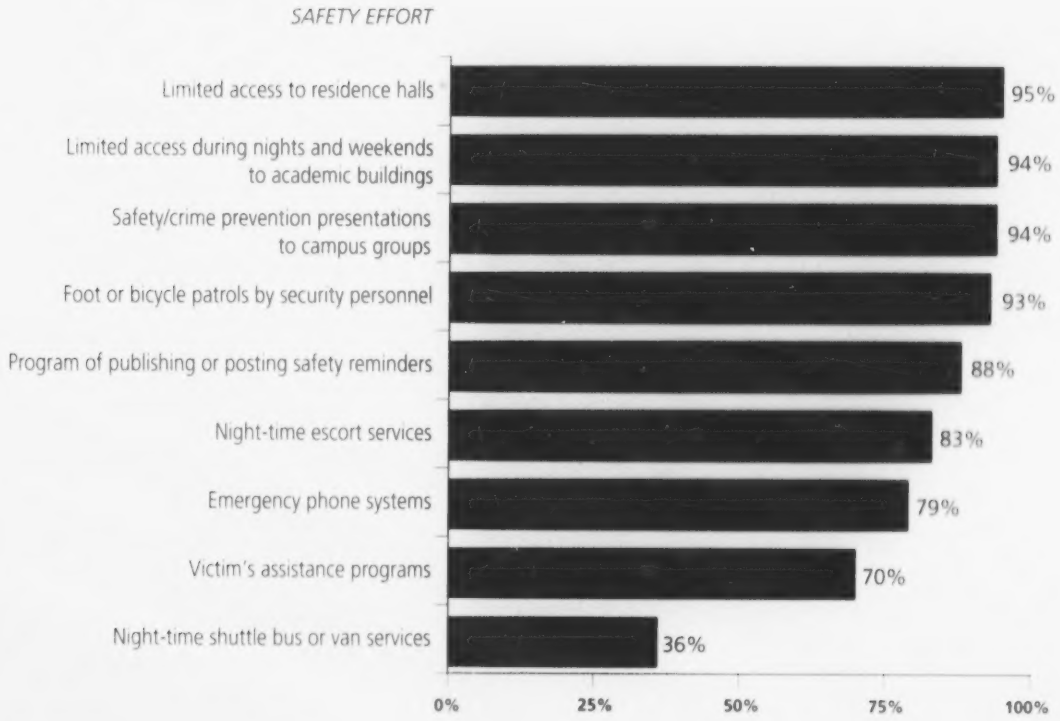
Percentage of NASULGC Institutions that had Implemented Specific Safety Efforts by 1996



SOURCE: NASULGC Council on Student Affairs Campus Safety Survey, working papers, 1997.

FIGURE 5

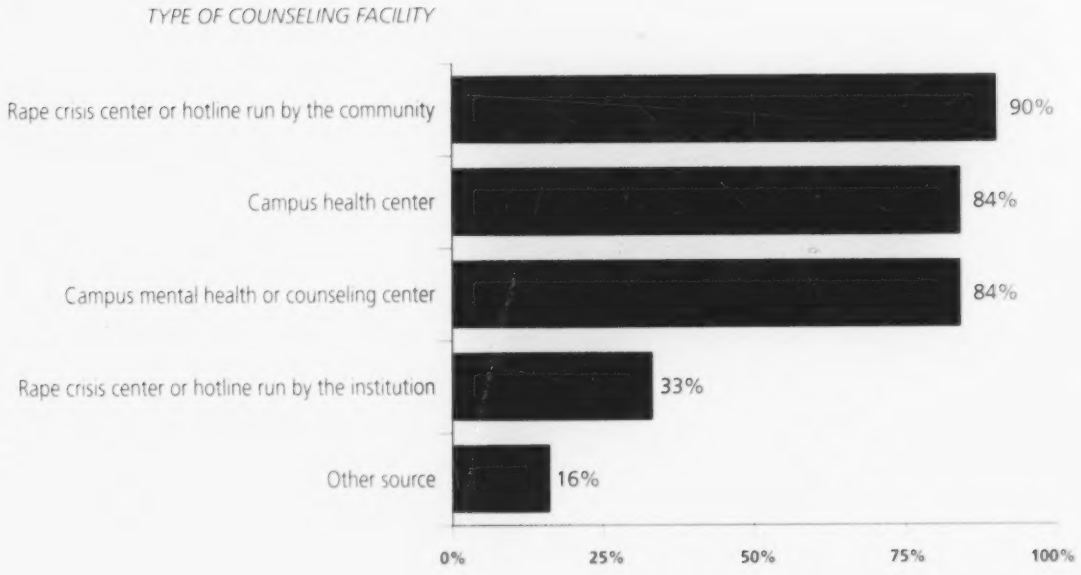
Percentage of Public, Four-Year Institutions that had Implemented Specific Safety Efforts by 1996



SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. *Campus Crime and Security at Postsecondary Education Institutions.* Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1997, pp. 36–37.

FIGURE 6

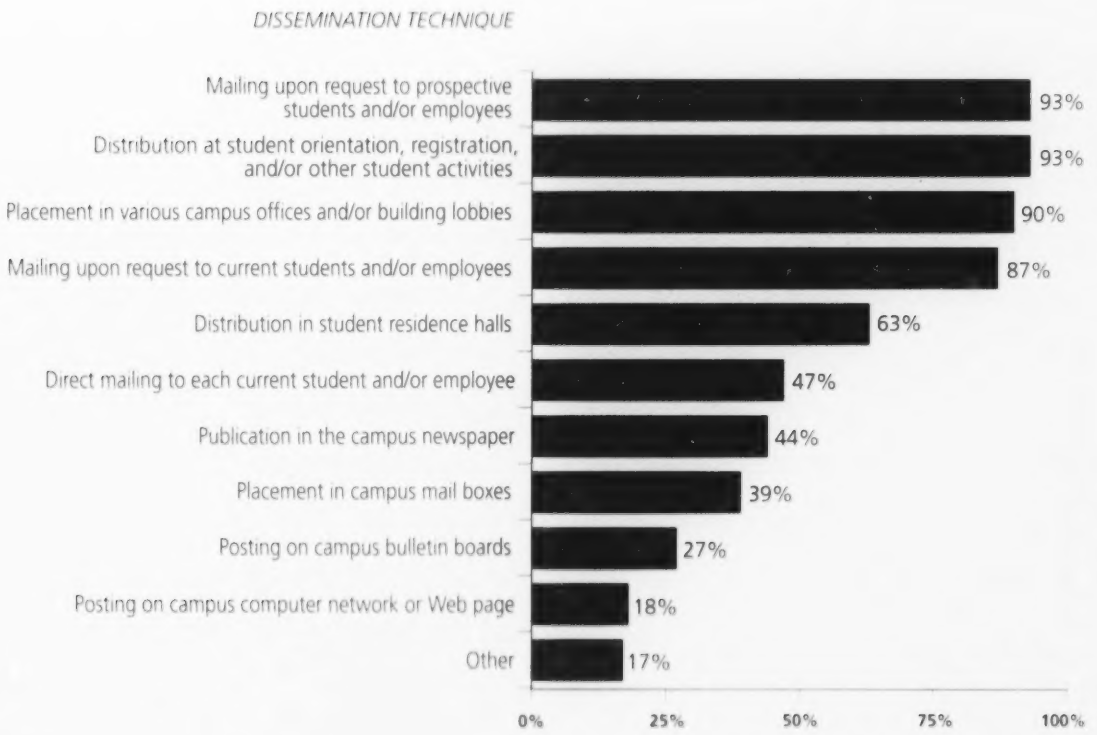
Percentage of Public, Four-Year Institutions Using Different Counseling Facilities for Victims of Sex Offenses: 1996



SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. *Campus Crime and Security at Postsecondary Education Institutions.* Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1997, p. 32.

FIGURE 7

Percentage of Public, Four-Year Institutions Using Specific Strategies to Disseminate Annual Security Reports: 1996



SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *Campus Crime and Security at Postsecondary Education Institutions*, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1997, pp. 28–29.

APPENDIX A:
List of NASULGC Survey Respondents

Alabama A & M University
Arizona State University
Auburn University
Bowling Green State University
California State University-Sacramento
City University of New York
City University of New York-Graduate School
Cleveland State University
Colorado State University
Cornell University
East Carolina University
Florida A & M University
Florida Atlantic University
Florida International University
Florida State University
Georgia State University
Iowa State University
Kansas State University
Kent State University
Langston University
Louisiana State University and A & M College
Michigan Technological University
Mississippi State University
Montana State University
Montana Technological University
North Carolina State University
North Dakota State University
Ohio State University
Ohio University
Oklahoma State University
Oregon State University
Pennsylvania State University
Prairie View A & M University
South Dakota State University
State University of New York-Albany
State University of New York-Buffalo
State University of New York-Stony Brook
Temple University
Texas A & M University
Texas A & M University System
Texas Technological University
University of Akron
University of Alabama-Huntsville
University of Arizona
University of Arkansas
University of California-Davis
University of California-Los Angeles
University of California-Riverside
University of California-Santa Barbara
University of Central Florida
University of Cincinnati
University of Connecticut
University of Delaware
University of Florida
University of Georgia
University of Hawaii
University of Houston
University of Idaho
University of Illinois-Chicago
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
University of Iowa
University of Kentucky
University of Maine
University of Maryland-College Park
University of Maryland-Eastern Shore
University of Memphis
University of Michigan
University of Minnesota
University of Missouri-Columbia
University of Missouri-Kansas City
University of Missouri-Rolla
University of Missouri-St. Louis
University of Montana
University of New Orleans
University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill
University of North Carolina-Charlotte
University of North Dakota
University of Northern Colorado
University of Oregon
University of South Carolina
University of Texas-Arlington
University of Texas-Austin
University of Washington
University of Wyoming
Utah State University
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
Washington State University
Wayne State University
West Virginia University

NOTE: There are several additional unidentified branch campuses that responded to the survey and were included in the tabulations.

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